



MISSOURI PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

WHEN DID PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES BEGIN IN MISSOURI?

In 2000 the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education began exploring school improvement initiatives focused on the secondary school. One project evolved from a national conference on “Re-inventing High Schools” and enlisted selected secondary schools to create professional learning communities and serve as models and mentors for others. As more schools sought to engage in work based on professional learning communities, the Department developed a process for applying it to schools of all grade levels and providing ongoing training and support.

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

The numerous writers and researchers in the fields of business and education who discuss professional learning communities agree that shared purpose, collaborative activity, and collective responsibility for results are critical aspects. For the purpose of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s projects, a PLC is a K-12 school-improvement model that increases student achievement by building the capacity of school personnel to create and sustain the conditions that promote high levels of student and adult learning.

WHAT GRADE LEVELS MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

Elementary, middle/junior high schools, and secondary schools may all apply the concepts of a professional learning community. Although some of the prominent education writers and researchers on this topic have backgrounds in secondary schools, there is nothing that precludes any school from doing collaborative work focusing on student achievement.

WHAT “DRIVES” A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

Professional learning communities see student learning, not teaching, as their mission. The policies, instruction, curriculum,

programs, professional development, and other functions of the school all support student learning. In maintaining this constant focus on learning, three questions become paramount:

1. What should students know and be able to do?
2. How will the school determine that students have learned the essential knowledge and skills?
3. How will the school respond when students do not learn?

WHAT DOES A SCHOOL THAT IS A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

1. The daily work of the school is driven by common purpose, shared vision and collective commitments.
2. There are high expectations regarding student achievement and a commitment on the part of staff to accept responsibility for student learning.
3. The learning of each student is monitored on a timely basis using common core curriculum and common assessments aligned with state standards.
4. School structures support student learning and provide additional time and support for students who initially do not achieve intended outcomes.
5. Job-embedded professional development leads to the collective identification of, reflection about, and implementation of “best practices” for improved student achievement.
6. Staff members work collaboratively in processes that foster continuous improvement in all indicators of student achievement.
7. The use of data promotes an action orientation and focus on results.
8. Leadership of school improvement processes is widely dispersed and helps sustain a culture of continuous improvement.

IS TRAINING OFFERED FOR NEW PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES?

YES! The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offers comprehensive, ongoing training, technical assistance, and support through its regional Centers for Missouri Accelerated Schools and Professional Learning Communities.

Teams from new schools attend a summer academy and then monthly meetings throughout the school year. Team members serve as leaders within their own schools.

Teams from continuing schools meet three or four times per year.

On-site assistance and mentor visits are provided to each school.

Each professional learning community may participate in a two-day Powerful Learning Conference.

Additional training and professional development opportunities are offered throughout the year by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and its regional centers.

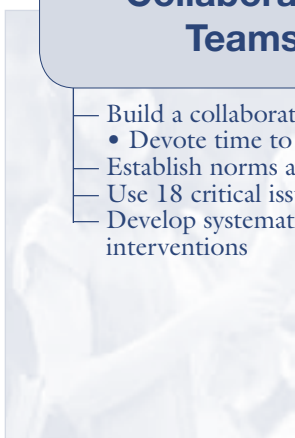
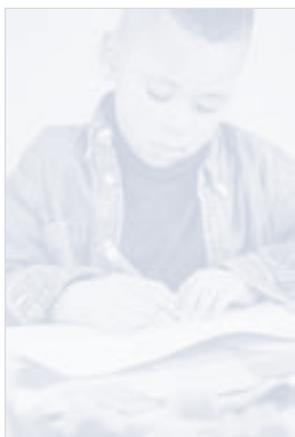
HOW MANY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES ARE IN MISSOURI?

Teams of educators in many Missouri schools have read, studied, and worked to create professional learning communities. At this time, over 100 schools participate in formal programs sponsored by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. In addition to workshops and conferences featuring recognized experts in the field, the schools are served by regional centers at five state universities — University of Missouri-Columbia, University of Missouri-Kansas City, University of Missouri-St. Louis, Southwest Missouri State University at Springfield, and Southeast Missouri State University at Cape Girardeau.

HOW CAN MY SCHOOL BECOME A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY?

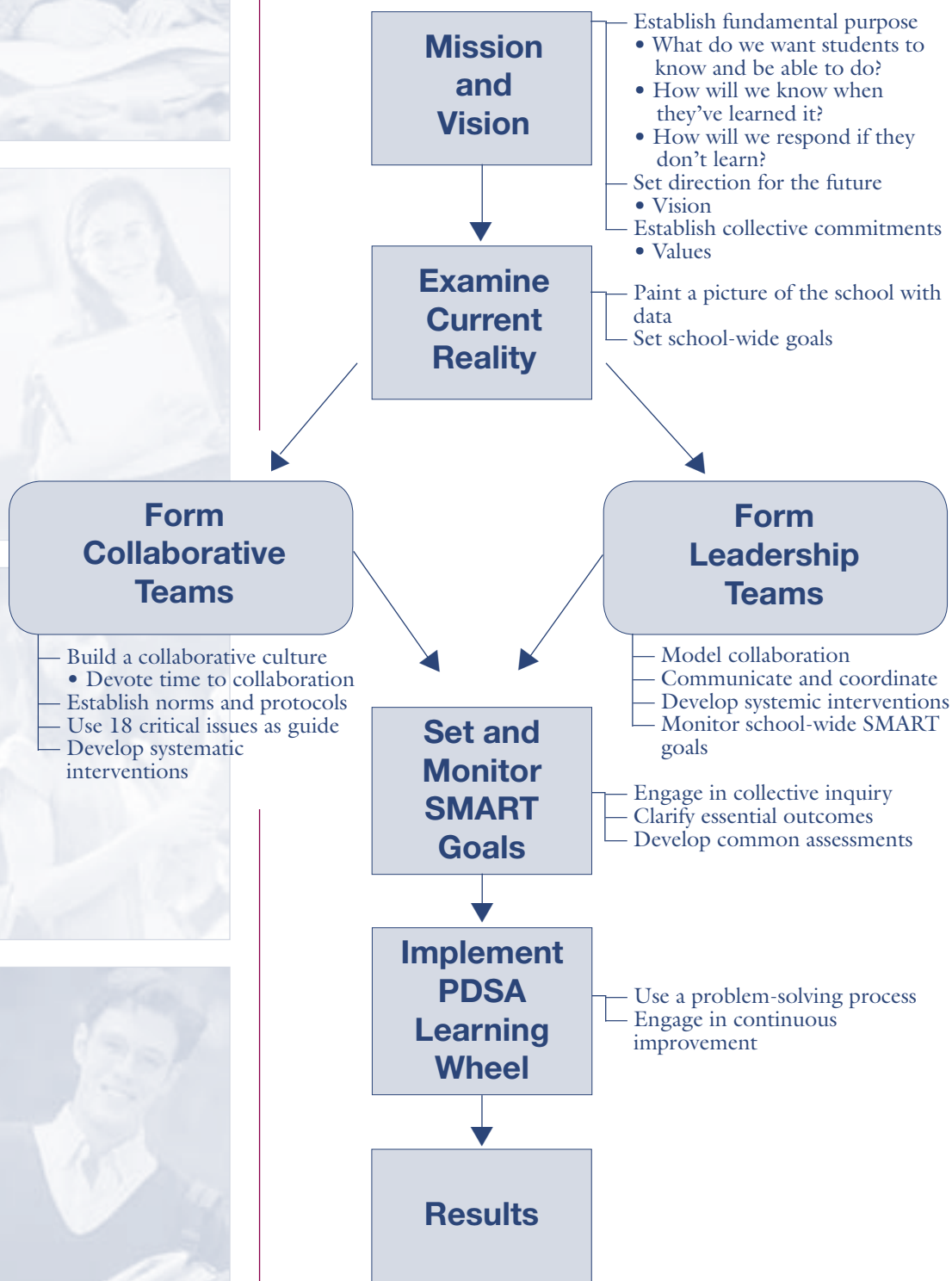
The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offers the training described above and provides a limited number of start-up grants. For more information, contact the project director or the coordinator of one of the regional centers listed on the back page.





The Professional Learning Communities. . .

PHILOSOPHY & PROCESS



Missouri Professional Learning Communities Project



Carolyn Deffenbaugh, Director
School Improvement Initiatives
Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480
Phone 573-751-2332 Fax 573-522-6526
E-mail: carolyn.deffenbaugh@dese.mo.gov

Missouri Centers for Accelerated Schools and Professional Learning Communities

◆ University of Missouri-Columbia
Dr. Terri Martin, Coordinator
205 London Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
Phone 573-884-0096 Fax 573-884-5622
E-mail: martinte@missouri.edu

◆ University of Missouri-St. Louis
Carolyn Neal, Coordinator
St. Louis Regional Education Park
8225 Florissant Road
St. Louis, MO 63121-4499
Phone 314-516-6867 Fax 314-516-6844
E-mail: cneal@umsl.edu

◆ University of Missouri-Kansas City
Lewis Gowin, Coordinator
5324 Harrison
Kansas City, MO 64110-2499
Phone 816-235-2442 Fax 816-235-5624
E-mail: gowinl@umkc.edu

◆ Southwest Missouri State University
Kathie Lewis, Coordinator
430 South Avenue, Floor #4
Springfield, MO 65806
Phone 417-829-5065 Fax 417-829-5072
E-mail: kal912t@smsu.edu

◆ Southeast Missouri State University
Peggy Hitt, Coordinator
One University Plaza, MS 0120
926 Broadway
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701-4799
Phone 573-986-6130 Fax 573-651-2251
E-mail: peggy.hitt@dese.mo.gov

Missouri Professional Learning Communities on the Internet

<http://dese.mo.gov/divteachqual/sii>



Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102-0480

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs may be directed to the Title IX Coordinator, Jefferson State Office Building, 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-751-4581.